

ENVIRONMENT AND THE FOOD QUEST 115

western part of the Division, it cannot be said that sago is anywhere scarce. The mode of preparation is simple and expeditious: it consists in kneading and watering the pith which has been scraped from the trunk, in allowing the sago to be carried off in suspension, and in leaving it to settle in a trough. The apparatus is prepared almost wholly from parts of the sago palm itself, and, except for the scraper and a strainer or sieve of coco-nut fibre, may be extemporized on the spot. The finished product is known as 'wet' sago, being a solid block of which the surface is hardened and glazed by scorching. The natives do not find it necessary to dry the product for their own use, and probably know nothing of the process. In the inland districts where the trees are sometimes individually owned sago is highly prized, and young palms, I am told, may be transplanted. In the large swamps the system is one of clan ownership, and as far as I know there is no sort of culture of the palms. 262 252

As a collector the Orokaiva is again an opportunist. Only in time of scarcity, it would appear, does he or his wife go out expressly to gather fern fronds and leaves—the pidgin English 'cabbage'; but wherever he goes he keeps his eye open for food—honey (for which he will fell a tree and smoke out the bees), clusters of somewhat insipid wild figs, nuts, snails, even a nest of flying ants. 423 245

He has certain trees, however, which afford a regular supply of food, viz. bread-fruit in several varieties, the *Tanga* nut, and the cycad *Puga*. The bush does not abound in fruit: of the numerous representatives of the genus *Ficus* only a few are edible, none very tempting, and the wild mango is comparatively rare. [There are some poisonous fruits and plants, chief among them the creeper called 'New Guinea Dynamite', used by the natives for fishing and suicides.] But they have definite opinions as to what may be eaten and what must be left alone, being presumably brought up to this knowledge. [I have seen a little child scolded for mouthing a leaf of 'New Guinea Dynamite' growing in the village.] Although 137 262

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- 137 edible fruits are rare, there is a very fine red or yellow
262 ball called *Hega* which is plentiful and which annoys the
thirsty traveller by its resemblance to an orange. It is
in fact, as the natives say, only food for devils.

3. *Garden Products: their Introduction and Distribution*

- 244 The products of native horticulture in the Northern
Division may be roughly classified. The list opposite
is fairly complete in the more important items.

In addition to the list there are some garden herbs
and plants used as spinach, or flavouring to the cooked
taro. The native names of the most important, as far as
I know them, are *Ombi*, *Taramu*, and *Nyaditi*. Lastly,
247 there is a list of ornamental plants—croton in countless
varieties, striated dracaena, crimson amaranth, and flame-
coloured or magenta coxcombs—which add much to the
brightness and charm of a village or a sunny garden-
clearing, and which have in some cases a magical as well
as an ornamental value; and besides these a number of
scented plants which a native loves for their own sake
and for the seductive fragrance which is meant to make
him an irresistible lover.

- 244 If we select the products which are of real importance
to the Orokaiva they will make a much shorter list. They
• 245 are taro (the staple diet), yams, and sweet potatoes (both
of them no more than subsidiary), *ina* and sugar-cane,
bananas and plantains, coco-nut and betel palms.

- 244 The Orokaiva are essentially taro people. The plant
is grown universally and in a great number of varieties.¹
It is easily cultivated, nutritious, and, prepared by a
native housewife, very appetizing. The cook's habit of
252 spraying condiments out of her mouth over the pot may
daunt the inquisitive European who would otherwise
be willing to sample her work, but there is no denying

¹ I have the names of seventeen varieties, distinguishable by various prop-
erties of leaf, stalk, tuber, &c. There are no doubt many more. Codrington
notes the great variety of taro. Of yams, incidentally, he listed no less than
eighty varieties in the small island of Mota (Codrington, *Malansians*, pp. 304,
319).

2: Williams E, G-5 (1923-1925) 1928
OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

	European Name.	Native Name.	Remarks.
Tuberous	Manioc*	Maniote	Very rare among Orokaiva.
	Sweet potato	Geroia	
	Taro	Ba	
	Yam	Kai	
Graminaceous	Ina	Ina	An Andropogon
	Maize *	'Koni', Komona Kuku-ta-pije	
Cucurbitaceous	Sugar-cane	Jon (Don)	Indigenous
	Cucumber	?	
	Gourd	Sigi (Tigi)	
	Pumpkin*	Pumpkin, Batana	
Miscellaneous fruits, &c.	Water-melon*	—	
	Bananas and plantains	Pije (Bido)	
	Pineapples*	—	
	Tomatoes*	—	
Narcotics, &c.	Betel pepper	Hingi (Kingi)	Rare Piper betle [249]
	Tobacco	Orokaiva, Kaiva Kuku, Soka, &c.	
		Sa (Da)	
Cultivated trees and palms	Areca	Bu (Mutari)	Betel-nut palm
	Coco-nut	Siporo	
	Lime*	—	Rare Rare Rare
	Mandarin*	—	
	Mango*	Ewa	
	Orange*	—	Sometimes planted Sometimes planted ?
Valued trees, palms, &c.	Papaw*	'Popo', Bitani	
	Bark-cloth tree	Ajimo	
	Bread-fruit	Oga and Eumba	Used for fibre
	Fig	Junga	
	Hombari	Hombari	
	Mango (wild)	Ewa	
	Pandanus	Monga	Cycas media Terminalia Okari
	Pandanus (fruiting)	Onja	
	Paga	Paga	
	Okari	Tanga	

* The plants marked with an asterisk are of European introduction.

GARDEN PRODUCTS

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249 commonest names, however, are *Orokaiva* or *Kaiva*. I will not enter into the dispute as to the original meaning of the mysterious word *Orokaiva*, but if you pluck a tobacco leaf in a village and ask what it is called, three times out of four you will get the answer '*Orokaiva*'.

243 Associated with native tobacco is another plant of late
177 introduction, viz. maize or 'corn'. Informants will insist that maize was known, at least in some parts of the plains, before the coming of the white man; and they lay down the same course as that of tobacco for its progress northwards. Nowadays the usual name for maize is *Koni*, a native rendering of 'corn'; but there are at least three other names which are said by some to be earlier than *Koni*; they are *Komobani* and *Tambara* (neither of which I can explain), and the picturesque compound *Kuku-ta-pije*, literally, 'tobacco-banana', which implies a likeness between corn-cob and banana and perhaps a simultaneous introduction of corn and tobacco. As it appears certain that corn was introduced to this country by the white man, we have another instance in which the introduction has outstripped the introducer.²

244 Lastly, it was claimed by some that the papaw and the
177 pumpkin had come down from the hill people in the same way. Both these are European introductions, and if the claim be a true one, then we have a somewhat remarkable proof of the rapidity with which an introduced product may spread by contact—provided always that, like corn, it is a welcome addition to the native's *menu*. Of the more important products sugar-cane, sago, and some varieties of plantain are probably indigenous in the true sense of the word. The better kind of areca palm is said to be introduced, but there are wild varieties in the bush. The coco-nut, most domesticated of trees, seems to follow in the train of the human wanderer, thriving and rejoicing, as they say, in the sound of his voice.

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173 The legend has it that the coco-nut was first a girl.

² This at any rate among Wasida, Aiga, and Binandele people.

³ Cf. *Papua*, J. H. P. Murray, p. 103.

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round about. Natives will ask you politely for an orange-pip when oranges come down from Kokoda with the mail, but I have never yet heard of an orange-tree successfully grown by a native.

Sometimes you may meet a man returning from a journey with a bundle of rooted saplings on his shoulder—bread-fruit or *Ajimo*, the bark-cloth tree—which he means to plant in his garden. Near Dobodura I have seen a plantation of young *Ajimo* trees—perhaps 300—about 10 feet high and somewhat densely planted. The native is prone to plant his trees too closely, especially coco-nut and betel palms. The latter may sometimes be seen in soldierly rows, so close together that a big man could scarcely pass between. On the site of a new village an energetic village constable had made his own plantation of coco-nuts, lined, spaced, and each protected by a little fence against the pigs. Everything reflected credit upon his observation of white men's methods except that his coco-nuts were not more than 12 feet apart.

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(d) *Tending and Protecting*. While the taro are young they are kept fairly clear of weeds, but once they are fully established work grows slack and they are left to fight their own battle. Weeding, like most drudgery, is [462] mainly woman's work. It is done principally by hand or by trade-knife, and the weeds are thrown aside or hung untidily on the tree-stumps. As there is no implement resembling a hoe, the soil loses the advantage of being tilled and weeded at one and the same time.

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There are many degrees of tidiness and untidiness in native horticulture, and, as we have observed, the neglect of *kurokuro* grass is the most serious offence. But a weed-grown garden and its owner are objects of contempt. There is a tale (not wholly relevant but not to be spoiled by omitting the irrelevant) of a young bride, wooed by a ne'er-do-well youth and won by his false account of the large and well-kept garden which is to be hers. She consents to accompany him home and become his wife. Nearing his village they pass through broad expanses of